

Rhetorical Facades: Ugandan Counter-Terrorism Discourse in the Museveni Era

Research Thesis

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by

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*“If you are engaged in a battle, violent or peaceful, you must first of all define who the enemy is,
who the friend is, and why you characterize them as such.”*
– President Yoweri Museveni, *“Sowing the Mustard Seed”*

Introduction

The attacks of September 11th, 2001 ushered in a new era of international security priorities. Though mitigating the specter of terrorism had long been identified as a necessary task for most nations across the globe, the post-9/11 environment abruptly rendered counterterrorism more salient than ever before. On September 18th, the Bush Administration enacted the Authorization for Use of Military Force, establishing the legal justification necessary for American forces to conduct strikes that would “prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States.”¹ In an oft-quoted speech, President Bush vowed to conduct these operations in any nation associated with terrorism, and leveraged cooperation with an assertion that members of the international community were “either... with [the United States] ... or ... with the terrorists.”² Similar pressure was applied by international organizations such as the United Nations, within which the Security Council rapidly passed a resolution that bound all member states to meet explicit counterterrorism obligations.³

These events began to normalize the perception that the international community had to pick sides in a “war of ideas”⁴ that pitted “civilization ... [against] those who would destroy it.”⁵ The dichotomy was clear: those who worked with the United States in countering terrorism would be viewed as legitimate actors, while those who did not risked becoming international pariahs. Predictably, states responded with condemnations of those who commit acts of terrorism on a near-universal basis. However, just who and what qualified to be labeled as a terrorist and terrorism remains fiercely contested. This lack of definitional consensus incentivizes calculating

¹ S.J.Res. 23 (107th): Authorization for Use of Military Force

² Transcript of President Bush’s address, CNN, September 20, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>

³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), S/RES/1373

⁴ National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, February 2003, p. 23

⁵ Ibid, p. 29

regimes to appropriate the rhetoric of counterterrorism and to couch enduring, localized security issues within it. The result is a convenient rhetorical façade – one that enables the security apparatus of a given state to justify action taken against perceived threats to the government, be they rival political parties, groups of non-state actors, critical journalists, or individual dissidents, under the guise of counterterrorism.

This paper explores the motivations behind such rhetorical shifts and establishes the consequences that may result from an international mandate to combat that which is fluidly defined. The paper begins with an overview of the relevant academic literature on the power of definitions, rhetoric, and labels with a particular focus on how these concepts apply to terms such as terrorist and terrorism. Subsequently, a brief history of how these terms have been employed is provided in order to demonstrate that the meanings behind them have been subject to change. The paper then establishes the ongoing disparity in definitions suggested by members of academia, government, and the international community. A section on changing international legal conventions and norms with respect to terrorism follows, establishing a history of divergent compliance with such conventions despite widespread rhetorical support. In order to best understand the incentives behind the appropriation of these labels and definitions, the paper then employs a case study of rhetorical shifts by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and his administration over the duration of his nearly thirty year (and ongoing) tenure in office. A brief conclusion follows.

The Power of a Name

In a world full of complexity and uncertainty, labels serve as heuristics – valuable shortcuts that indicate the probable behaviors and characteristics of actors and objects that are

encountered by a given individual. Definitions provide the meaning behind these labels, delineating how and when it is appropriate to apply them and, implicitly, how and when it is not. These meanings arise through a communal discourse and, because the end result is in a sense negotiated, “the [definition] process is also to some extent competitive.”⁶ Upon such rhetorical battlegrounds, actors with disparate agendas are incentivized to “attain a victory of interpretation and ensure that [their] particular viewpoint triumphs.”⁷

These rhetorical battlegrounds are particularly contentious regarding terrorism, a term with an unfavorable connotation. In contemporary interpretation, acts of terrorism are often presumed to fall outside of the established norms of warfare, employed by those dishonorable, cowardly, and despicable enough to deliberately target the innocent and most vulnerable. This is in stark contrast to the way in which conventional soldiers are typically viewed by the populations they serve: as honorable, brave, and deserving of a certain degree of reverence. Because such a dichotomy has been established, wherein terrorism is characterized as entirely antithetical to the norms not only of warfare but also of human behavior, those labeled as such will struggle to establish “legitimacy for their cause or sympathy for their actions.”⁸

Acts of terrorism are, by nature, inherently communicative. Though the direct brunt of an attack may be shouldered by a crowd of civilians, important infrastructure, or an otherwise symbolically significant target, the primary goal is to incite a climate of widespread fear and to use it as leverage to influence an entire population and or its governing bodies.⁹ It is this additional communicative element, this “propaganda by the deed,” that differentiates terrorism

⁶ Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism (2nd Ed.), Joseph S. Tuman, p. 45

⁷ Fighting Words: Naming Terrorists, Bandits, Rebels and Other Violent Actors, Michael V. Bhatia, *Third World Quarterly*, 26(1), 2005, p. 7

⁸ Tuman, p. 57

⁹ On Terrorism Itself, Carl Wellman, *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 13(4), 1979

from conventional violence and crime.¹⁰ It is also, however, what makes those labeled as terrorists particularly vulnerable to being undermined rhetorically – if such individuals and groups can be characterized as illegitimate and morally reprehensible, their power to win over hearts and minds to a given cause can be curtailed. By extension, if governments can establish their foes as terrorists, they simultaneously legitimize their own applications of violence and recruit support for such action.¹¹ As a result, states, groups, and individuals are all incentivized to jockey for the most advantageous definitions of terrorism in order to further their agendas.

This discussion is not designed to condone terrorist attacks or obfuscate their heinous nature. Rather, it seeks to illustrate the power that can be channeled through rhetoric and labels. The battlespace of the war on terror extends beyond what is material and occurs in a rhetorical dimension as well, and the resultant understanding of what terrorism is and is not has real consequences. In order to explore this idea further, it is necessary to briefly trace the evolution of the of the term terrorist from its inception through to its contemporary application.

Terrorism: An Abbreviated Etymology

The term terrorism originated in the late 18th century during the French Revolution as Robespierre's nascent Jacobin government purged thousands of fellow Frenchmen in a counter-revolutionary strategy that the Jacobins themselves referred to as 'The Terror'.¹² As Jaggar notes, "it is worth remembering that the original case [of terrorism] was one of politically motivated violence carried out by a government against its own citizens."¹³ Over the centuries that followed the application of the term underwent a number of shifts, often mirroring changes in terrorist

¹⁰ What Is Terrorism, Why Is It Wrong, and Could It Ever Be Morally Permissible?, Alison M. Jaggar, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 36(2), 2005, p. 206

¹¹ Bhatia, p. 12

¹² Tuman, pp. 4-6

¹³ Jaggar, p. 202

tactics, doctrine, and technological innovation.¹⁴ Despite its initial use as a term describing state-sanctioned violence, terrorism underwent a reversal and was proudly adopted by 19th century anarchist groups who conducted assassination campaigns that targeted influential members of government.¹⁵ One such anarchist, after wounding a Russian police commander, “[threw] her weapon to the floor ... proclaim[ing] that she was a terrorist, not a killer.”¹⁶ The interpretation that terrorism could be condoned and even celebrated under certain circumstances was evidently quite compelling at the time, as the attacker was later acquitted in court for what was determined to be a justifiable action.¹⁷ Such an interpretation would prove to be short-lived.

After World War I, as defeated empires receded into the annals of history and new states emerged via the process of self-determination, dissident groups in still-colonized areas formed, targeting law enforcement and military members with the hope of inciting heavy-handed responses that would lend sympathy to their independence desires.¹⁸ It was during this period that the contemporary rhetorical struggle over the application of the terrorist label originated. Non-state actors adopted the freedom fighter identity that is now commonplace in the popular lexicon as they sought to further legitimize their independence movements and to avoid the growing negative connotation associated with terrorism.¹⁹ Similarly, governments began to realize the useful implications that resulted from branding opposition groups with the pejorative term terrorist.²⁰ Though terrorist tactics and targets would continue to develop in subsequent years, the rhetorical strategies that emerged during this era remain a constant to this day.

¹⁴ The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11, David C. Rapoport, *Anthropoetics*, 8(1), 2002, p. 3

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid, (author quoting Adam B. Ulam, *In the Name of the People* (1977), p. 269)

¹⁷ The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe, Martin A. Miller, p. 42

¹⁸ Rapoport, p.5

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

The anti-colonialist wave was followed by Vietnam-era ‘New Left’ terror groups who gained notoriety on the world stage for utilizing daring and highly visible tactics that included strikes on foreign embassies, the kidnapping of prominent businessmen and diplomats, and the hijacking of airliners, thus catalyzing the increased use of the term international terrorism.²¹ Often radically nationalist in nature, third wave groups moved from simply targeting members of the state apparatus to deliberately targeting any member of society as a whole.²² This indiscriminant approach marked the origin of what Miller calls “terrorism without boundaries,” a major tactical shift that has characterized most terrorist activity in the years since.²³ Shortly thereafter, the fourth and final wave emerged. Generally associated with radical Islamist groups, fourth wave terrorism is distinguished by the salience of religious identity and its centrality in resultant conflicts.²⁴ Bruce Hoffman argues that it was during this period that terrorism moved “from an individual phenomenon of subnational violence to ... a wider pattern of non-state conflict.”²⁵ The increased targeting of American installations and forces during this wave, and ultimately the attacks of September 11th, 2001, would serve as the impetus for the War on Terror.

The evolution of the meaning behind the term terrorism and the resultant shifts in its application are evident. Though being labeled a terrorist in the 19th century may have conferred a certain degree of legitimacy, it soon was transformed not only into a derisive term that was to be avoided if at all possible but also a rhetorical tool that could be used to delegitimize others. Indeed, many prominent terrorists and terror groups throughout history have sought to avoid the label, preferring instead terms with positive connotations that serve their own interests and agendas such as freedom fighter, guerrilla, liberation movement, or rebel. Perhaps the most

²¹ Rapoport, p. 6

²² Rapoport, p. 5

²³ Miller, p. 31

²⁴ Rapoport, p.7

²⁵ Inside Terrorism, Bruce Hoffman, see: <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/h/hoffman-terrorism.html>

notorious terrorist in history, Osama bin Laden, resisted being labeled in a 2004 speech, arguing that the attacks of 9/11 were acts of self-defense and asking rhetorically: "... should a man be blamed for defending his sanctuary?"²⁶ Prompted by the same treatment, Ali Ahmeti, the leader of the Macedonian-based National Liberation Army (NLA), replied that a "person cannot be a terrorist... who wears an army badge, who has an objective for which he is fighting, who respects the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Tribunal, who acts in public with name and surname, and answers for everything he does... who is aiming for good reforms and democracy in the country."²⁷ Ahmeti surely makes a more convincing case for his movement than bin Laden, and thus while some members of NATO were convinced that the NLA fit the bill for a terrorist organization, others pointed to their "restraint" as clear evidence that they were merely an insurgent group.²⁸ In 2002, Chechen separatists seized a crowded theater in Moscow, capturing over 900 hostages and causing a stand-off with Russian authorities that would last for three days and ultimately result in the deaths of 130 people.²⁹ A reporter with the British Sunday Times was able to enter the theater and interview the group's leader, Movsar Barayev, who, in response to terrorist labeling, asserted that "we'd have asked for a plane and a million dollars if we were terrorists."³⁰ Here Barayev implied that the goals of his group, namely to end an ongoing Russian war in Chechnya,³¹ were more legitimate than those of the less principled groups who actually qualify to be labeled as terrorists. In a final and particularly illuminating set of examples, Tuman points to Nelson Mandela being labeled a terrorist by the South African

²⁶ Full transcript of bin Laden's speech, Al Jazeera, 2004, <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/11/200849163336457223.html>

²⁷ Is There a Good Terrorist?, Timothy Garton Ash, 2001, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2001/nov/29/is-there-a-good-terrorist/>

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Moscow theatre siege: Questions remain unanswered, BBC News, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20067384>

³⁰ Terror In Moscow, CBS News, 2003, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/terror-in-moscow/>

³¹ Chechen gunmen storm Moscow theater, The Guardian, 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/oct/24/russia.chechnya>

government for his involvement with the African National Congress; Menachem Begin's involvement with the Jewish Irgun group that led to his branding as a terrorist by the British; and Yasser Arafat's characterization as a terrorist by Israel for his position in the Palestinian Liberation Organization.³² All three men would go on to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize as public opinion shifted over the years that followed, illustrating just how interchangeable labels can be under certain circumstances.³³

Indeed, across time and space groups with disparate agendas can be observed resisting labels that threaten to delegitimize and undermine their goals and reputation. In contrast, governments are incentivized to apply these labels liberally. Much of this rhetorical tug-of-war unfolds within media outlets that must choose which labels to use carefully. In the pursuit of objective reporting, some outlets like Reuters, for example, refrain from using the terms terrorist or terrorism whatsoever with the exception of direct quotations, preferring instead to "aim for a dispassionate use of language so that individuals, organizations and governments can make their own judgment on the basis of facts."³⁴ Similarly, the BBC suggests that "the word 'terrorist' itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding," and official policy is to avoid employing it if possible.³⁵ But the result can sometimes be just as confusing: a study of media coverage during the 2004 Beslan school hostage crisis in Russia found the usage of as many as twenty different terms to describe the perpetrators, ranging from criminals and rebels to separatists and even activists.³⁶

³² Tuman, pp. 15-16

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Reuters Handbook of Journalism, The Reuters Style Guide, <http://handbook.reuters.com/?title=T#terrorism>

³⁵ Terrorism: Language when Reporting Terrorism, BBC Editorial Guidelines, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidance-reporting-terrorism-full>

³⁶ They're Terrorists – Not Activists, Daniel Pipes, 2004

The decision of some media outlets to refrain from the use of these terms is indicative of the strongly unfavorable connotations they evoke. Though terrorist groups and their tactics have evolved throughout history, our visceral reaction to those labeled as such generally has not. Despite such firm entrenchment in the popular lexicon, just what actions actually constitute terrorism remains a contentious debate amongst those in academia, government, and international organizations, and the prospect of a universally agreed upon definition of terrorism continues to be fleeting. The following explores a sampling of these definitional efforts to establish some points of contention.

Contemporary Definitions

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides a rather simplistic definition and thus a useful starting point for discussion:

*Terrorism: the use of violent acts to frighten the people in an area as a way of trying to achieve a political goal.*³⁷

This definition contains a number of the most common factors present in most terrorism definitions, including a use of violence, an ulterior goal of intimidation, and the presence of an underlying political motive. However, those in academia have identified numerous other factors that must be taken into account, and in so doing have proposed hundreds of alternative definitions that range along a minimalist to maximalist spectrum.³⁸

Academic Definitions

Those in academia have struggled to identify a definition that pleases everyone. Indeed, the simplest definitions are often unable to address much of the nuance that has sparked the debate,

³⁷ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/terrorism>

³⁸ The Definition of Terrorism, *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, Alex P. Schmid, p. 39

while the most nuanced encounter the opposite problem and become too unwieldy, limiting their practical application. Schmid notes the widespread pessimism with which some academics approach the task: Walter Laqueur claimed that the debate would “lead to endless controversies”; Brian Jenkins calls it the “Bermuda Triangle of terrorism”; and J.V. Witbeck asserts sardonically that terrorism may be as simple as “violence I don’t support.”³⁹ Perhaps the best explanation behind the difficulties comes from Jeffrey Simon, who suggests that the task is like describing in black and white a phenomenon that is inexorably grey.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, many attempts to define terrorism are useful. Reilly provides a particularly minimalist example:

*Terrorism is the use of intentional violence against non-combatants for political ends.*⁴¹

While Reilly identifies the use of violence, the victimization of non-combatants, and an ultimate political motive, the definition does not take into account other potential motivations (e.g. religious or social) or targets (e.g. infrastructure, symbols). The definition also neglects to address the element of coercion. Richardson’s definition is a bit more nuanced:

*Terrorism is politically motivated violence directed against non-combatant or symbolic targets which is designed to communicate a message to a broader audience. The critical feature of terrorism is the deliberate targeting of innocents in an effort to convey a message to another party*⁴².

Richardson brings in an element not seen in a majority of definitions – the potential for terrorist acts to deliberately strike symbolic targets rather than simply non-combatants or civilians. The

³⁹ Ibid, p. 42

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 44

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 133 (quoting Reilly, 1994)

⁴² Ibid, p. 137 (quoting Richardson, 1999)

definition also makes it explicitly clear that the attack is designed to convey a message. Alison Jaggar proposes the following:

*Terrorism is the use of extreme threats or violence designed to intimidate or subjugate governments, groups, or individuals. It is a tactic of coercion intended to promote further ends that in themselves may be good, bad or indifferent. Terrorism may be practiced by governments or international bodies or forces, sub-state groups or even individuals. Its threats or violence are aimed directly or immediately at the bodies or belongings of innocent civilians but these are typically terrorists' secondary targets; the primary targets of terrorists are the governments, groups or individuals that they wish to intimidate.*⁴³

This definition is among the most inclusive proposed, and casts a wide net over the many forms in which terrorism may manifest itself. Jaggar includes stipulations that are standard in most definitions, noting an overall goal of intimidation or subjugation and the targeting of innocent civilians, but also goes so far as to suggest that an act of terror may be the means to a *good* end, and acknowledges the possibility of top-down, state-sponsored terror as well. Bruce Hoffman, after detailing the difficulties of defining terrorism, proposes another maximalist definition:

The deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider 'target audience' that might include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government or political party, or public opinion in general. Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to

⁴³ Jaggar, p. 209

*consolidate power where there is very little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale.*⁴⁴

Hoffman interestingly leaves out the common assertion that the victims must be civilians or noncombatants. Perhaps this is to take into account Kapitan's perspective, which suggests that "political violence is often committed by those who act from outrage over perceived injustices and who do not think their targets to be 'innocent' of these injustices."⁴⁵ Although the sample size included here is small, it is clear that those in academia vary widely in their interpretation of terrorism.

United States Government Definitions

So too do the definitions vary across agencies of the United States government. Hoffman argues that this variance is the result of differences in the agency's missions.⁴⁶ The Department of State defines terrorism as:

*Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.*⁴⁷

Surveyed on what they did not like about the Department of State's definition, some academics argued that terrorism could be motivated by more than just politics, including religion, a specific issue, or a host of other reasons; that it does not include the intimidation or coercion aspect; and that it does not take into account that threats of terrorism can be just as effective as actual violence.⁴⁸ In addition, it only references subnational groups or clandestine agents, leaving out

⁴⁴ Hoffman

⁴⁵ The Terrorism of 'Terrorism', Tomis Kapitan, In James Sterba, ed., *Terrorism and International Justice* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 47-66

⁴⁶ Hoffman

⁴⁷ United States Code, Title 22, Section 2656f(d), <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65464.pdf>

⁴⁸ Schmid, p. 45

the possibility that states themselves can commit terrorism. Another government entity, The Department of Defense, defines terrorism as:

*The unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political.*⁴⁹

This definition corrects some of the criticisms fielded regarding the Department of State's attempt: there is a mention of the threat of violence, it takes into account motivations other than ones that are political, and it includes the coercive element. It entirely avoids the issue of delineating whether states, groups, or individuals can commit acts of terror. The Federal Bureau of Investigation utilizes definitions found in U.S. Code, which states that acts of international terrorism must meet three criteria:

- (1) Involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;*
- (2) Appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and*
- (3) Occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum.*⁵⁰

The FBI's definition uniquely references violations of federal and state law and mentions the implications of jurisdiction, clearly reflecting the agency's law enforcement role. It fails,

⁴⁹ Department of Defense, http://dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/t/7591.html

⁵⁰ Definitions of Terrorism in the U.S. Code, Federal Bureau of Investigation, <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism-definition>

however, to take into account the potential motivations behind such attacks, or the types of actors that employ such attacks.

Much of the nuance in governmental definitions likely stems from the geopolitical consequences of applying the terrorist label, which appears to be made largely based on a calculus of political incentives. The Nigerian government, for example, *opposed* the designation of Boko Haram as a terrorist group by the United States State Department, fearing the elevation in prestige and legitimacy such a title would confer.⁵¹ Furthermore, some have suggested that the State Department identified “three Basque groups ... and ... a little known separatist group in Xinjiang province” as terrorists in order to secure “Spain’s support for and China’s acquiescence in the war in Iraq, respectively.”⁵²

The United Nations’ Effort to Define Terrorism

The quarrelsome nature of labeling has been evident during United Nations efforts to coordinate and implement counter-terrorism policies as well. Indeed, UN efforts to reach a consensus definition of terrorism can be traced back to the days of its precursor, the League of Nations, which in 1937 ultimately chose not to adopt the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism.⁵³ The points of contention in the years since have often surrounded “issues of occupation, liberation movements and state-terrorism.”⁵⁴ In the 1970s, the United Nations created the Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism, but, despite their best efforts, not one of the seven proposed definitions was agreeable for all member states.⁵⁵ A consensus definition still has not been reached at the time of this paper being written. Despite a lack of

⁵¹ Boko Haram: Inside the State Department debate over the ‘terrorist’ label, The Washington Post, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2014/05/19/boko-haram-inside-the-state-department-debate-over-the-terrorist-label/>

⁵² Bhatia, p.16 (quoting Mariner, *Trivializing Terror*, 2003)

⁵³ What’s in a Name? How Nations Define Terrorism Ten Years after 9/11, *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 2011, Sudha Setty, p. 9 (quote found in footnote 19)

⁵⁴ Bhatia, p. 15 (quoting Friedrichs, *Defining the International Public Enemy*)

⁵⁵ Schmid, p. 50

agreement on just what terrorism is, member states have conceded that terrorism is a problem worth addressing, and have thus created a number of legal measures to do so.

The International Counter-Terror Regime

International legal measures designed by the Member States of the United Nations to mitigate terrorist activity have existed for decades and can be traced back to an initial 1963 convention that criminalized dangerous behavior aboard aircraft.⁵⁶ In the 1970s, new UN conventions addressed attacks against diplomats⁵⁷ and the taking of hostages⁵⁸, reflecting an effort to respond to the evolution of tactics employed by terror groups.⁵⁹ This reactive trend continued through the 1990s with the arrival of conventions on maritime safety⁶⁰, plastic explosives⁶¹, and the suppression of terrorist financing⁶², amongst others. These treaties and laws, a majority of which were initiated by the General Assembly, gradually normalized terrorism as a threat to the security of the international community. Attempts to achieve universal ratification and to implement mechanisms that would ensure compliance by all Member States, however, were lacking.⁶³

The events of September 11th, 2001, triggered a revised approach to countering terrorism by the United Nations. Less than three weeks after the attacks, the UN Security Council invoked

⁵⁶ 1963 Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/Conv1-english.pdf>

⁵⁷ 1973 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Internationally Protected Persons, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/english-18-7.pdf>

⁵⁸ 1979 International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/english-18-5.pdf>

⁵⁹ *The United Nations in the 21st Century* (4th ed.), 2012, Karen A. Mingst and Margaret P. Karns, p. 147

⁶⁰ 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/Conv8-english.pdf>

⁶¹ 1991 Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/Conv10-english.pdf>

⁶² 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/english-18-11.pdf>

⁶³ Mingst and Karns, p. 148

Chapter VII authority and enacted Resolution 1373, thereby binding all Member States to adhere to stringent requirements regarding the conduct of counter-terrorism.⁶⁴ These requirements included the suppression of terrorist finances, the denial of safe havens to and the prosecution of individuals who facilitate or are involved with terror groups, and an onus to cooperate with fellow states in these efforts. The resolution obligated all states to report their progress in implementing these stipulations within just ninety days, and urged them to adhere to the existing counter-terror legal architecture.”⁶⁵

Resolution 1373 not only redefined Member State obligations but also reorganized the United Nations’ approach to counter-terrorism, creating a Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) within the Security Council that is responsible for monitoring the efforts of Member States as they work to meet the resolution’s requirements. In 2004, Resolution 1535 created the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) in order to establish a “more permanent staff” as a supplement to carry out the CTC’s mission.⁶⁶ The CTED is comprised of a number of legal and subject matter experts whose task is to evaluate the reports submitted by Member States regarding their progression in implementing Resolution 1373. The CTED also includes technical experts who are able to consult with and provide specialized assistance to Member States throughout the implementation processes.⁶⁷

As of 2012, twenty-three separate bodies of the United Nations were tasked with counter-terrorism duties⁶⁸, and sixteen relevant international legal instruments had been established.⁶⁹

These laws and bodies are often referred to collectively as the counter-terror regime and are part

⁶⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), S/RES/1373

⁶⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), S/RES/1373; Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/aboutus.html>

⁶⁶ Mingst and Karns, p. 149

⁶⁷ The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/aboutus.html>

⁶⁸ Mingst and Karns, p. 148

⁶⁹ International Laws, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/laws.html>

of what some scholars view as a regulatory approach by the United Nations towards international security.⁷⁰ However, without clear parameters for just what terrorism is, the international mandate to aggressively contest it leaves room for abuse. Even the United Nations recognized this issue, noting that “calls by the international community to combat terrorism without defining the term, can be understood as leaving it to individual States to define what is meant by the term. This carries the potential for unintended human rights abuses and even the deliberate misuse of the term.”⁷¹

Divergent Compliance Despite Widespread Support

Compliance with the counter-terror regime before 2001 was low,⁷² but over the course of the following decade, over “one hundred states ha[d] acceded to or ratified at least ten of [the] conventions”⁷³ and every country became a signatory or party to at least one convention in the regime,⁷⁴ an improvement the UN characterized as dramatic.⁷⁵ During the 2005 World Summit, Member States “condemn[ed] terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever, and for whatever purposes,” agreeing that “it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.”⁷⁶ The General Assembly unanimously adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy the next year,⁷⁷ which united “all 192 Member States for the first time behind a common vision ... [that] reflected the international

⁷⁰ See, for example, Hudson, Not a Great Asset: The UN Security Council’s Counter-Terrorism Regime: Violating Human Rights; Kfir, A Regime in Need of Balance: The UN Counter-Terrorism Regimes of Security and Human Rights

⁷¹ Setty, p. 8 (quoting United Nations Special Rapporteur)

⁷² International Laws, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/laws.html>

⁷³ Mingst and Karns, p. 148

⁷⁴ International Laws, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/laws.html>

⁷⁵ Action to Counter Terrorism, <http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/makingadifference.shtml>

⁷⁶ Excerpts from the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, <http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/strategy/world-summit-outcome.shtml>

⁷⁷ The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, A/RES/60/288

community's resolve to combat the scourge of terrorism"⁷⁸ and included "[a pledge] to consider becoming parties to [the legal measures] without delay."⁷⁹ Illustrating the international community's continued concern towards counter-terrorism, Member States have reaffirmed their commitment on a biannual basis with unanimous resolutions in 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014.⁸⁰

Despite this widespread support and near-universal recognition of terrorism as a threat to international security, actual compliance with the laws making up the counter-terror regime continues to be anything but comprehensive. The United Nations suggests that while noncompliance may sometimes be attributed to "insufficient will," it more often is the result of insufficient capacity.⁸¹ In an encouraging show of support, every single Member State submitted a report on their implementation progress during the first round.⁸² In the years since, however, the submission of reports has dwindled and delays have mounted – a problem exacerbated by a UN choice to refrain from making the reports public and thus shaming non-cooperative states.⁸³ Although many countries have fallen short of implementing and cooperating with the counter-terror regime, many have nevertheless chosen to appropriate the growing international counter-terror norms for their own purposes, rhetorically seating their own localized issues within them.

The following section explores this phenomenon in the context of Uganda, which offers a desirable case study for two critical reasons. First, the current president, Yoweri Museveni, has been in office since January of 1986. Second, throughout his tenure, Museveni has faced off against a number of non-state actors, some of which have existed since before the events of 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror. Uganda thus offers a unique opportunity to examine how the

⁷⁸ First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation [sic] and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism: Inventory of State Programmes [sic], United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force

⁷⁹ United Nations, International Legal Instruments, <http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/instruments.shtml>

⁸⁰ See UN documents A/RES/62/272, A/RES/64/297, A/RES/66/282, and A/RES/68/276, respectively

⁸¹ United Nations High Level Panel, <http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/highlevelpanel.shtml>

⁸² Mingst and Karns, p. 149

⁸³ Ibid

rhetoric of a single administration has evolved between the pre to the post-9/11 periods, using actors and groups that have existed for decades as a proxy for rhetorical change.

A Case Study of Museveni's Uganda

Museveni's Rhetoric: The Rise to Power

Yoweri Museveni's use of rhetoric to strategically frame events and further his agenda began long before 9/11 and the subsequent global war on terror. In his 1997 autobiography, *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda*, Museveni chronicles his leadership of various political and military organizations between 1971 and 1986 as he headed efforts to depose Ugandan rulers Idi Amin and Milton Obote from office. After his interest in political activism was sparked during his youth, Museveni chose to attend university in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, due to its role as a base of operations for regional African liberation movements at the time.⁸⁴ His nationalist fervor was nurtured by interactions with fellow "freedom-fighter" groups such as the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), who were happy to provide weapons, training, and advice to Museveni's untested group of dissidents.⁸⁵ This experience, in conjunction with Museveni's displeasure with the repressive and sectarian nature of the regimes at the time, drove him to launch "a protracted armed struggle for liberation" with a goal of eventually establishing the truly democratic Uganda that he envisioned.⁸⁶ The details of these early military and political campaigns are not important for this discussion and are thus not examined here in depth. What is important, however, is the manner in which Museveni framed both his own forces and those in opposition during the campaigns, as it

⁸⁴ *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda*, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, p.19

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 56-57

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. xii

establishes his early affinity for some of the rhetorical strategies that have been described in previous sections of this paper.

Throughout the autobiography, Museveni deliberately classifies the various groups under his command with neutral or positively connoted terms - “freedom-fighters,”⁸⁷ “revolutionaries,”⁸⁸ and “guerillas” all appear often in the text.⁸⁹ The collective actions of these groups were described as part of a “people’s war,”⁹⁰ a “guerilla campaign,”⁹¹ a “liberation movement,”⁹² and a “struggle.”⁹³ Though the names of his organizations were regularly altered due to newfound alliances, restructuring, or political events, they always were an amalgam of positive terms, such as The Front for National Salvation (FRONASA),⁹⁴ the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF),⁹⁵ and ultimately the National Resistance Movement (NRM).⁹⁶ Even the individual battalions within his forces were named after “African heroic figures,” including “noted Ugandan opponents of British imperialism in the late 19th century.”⁹⁷

In contrast, pejoratives and negatively connoted terms were used with regularity to describe the Amin and Obote regimes. These individuals and their governments as a whole were described as “opportunist,”⁹⁸ “unprincipled,”⁹⁹ “reactionary,”¹⁰⁰ “sectarian,”¹⁰¹ and “despicable.”¹⁰² Their soldiers were “thugs,”¹⁰³ “buffoons,”¹⁰⁴ “executioners,”¹⁰⁵ and “bullies”¹⁰⁶

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 56, 106, 110, 114, 147

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 56, 26, 55, 60, 68, 80, 82, 123

⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 57, 63, 69, 99, 128, 130, 136, 144, 153

⁹⁰ Ibid, pp. 63, 70, 123

⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 70, 75

⁹² Ibid, pp. 76, 90, 91, 52, 93, 102, 114, 122, 123, 130, 137, 142, 148

⁹³ Ibid, pp. 74, 54, 89, 133, 147, 148, 151, 162

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 54

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 106

⁹⁶ Ibid, pp. 140-141

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 137

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 18, 67, 69

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 18, 35

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 57, 67, 91

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 39, 59, 69, 103

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 63

who were “incompetent,”¹⁰⁷ “illiterate,”¹⁰⁸ and “cowardly.”¹⁰⁹ Similarly, one of Museveni’s stated motivations behind his opposition to the Amin and Obote regimes was that he found their leadership to be “ideologically bankrupt.”¹¹⁰ The deliberate effort to dichotomize the political situation of the era – Museveni’s brave freedom fighters waging a people’s struggle against Amin and Obote’s violent thugs and bullies – is self-evident.

So too is Museveni’s resistance to being labeled by others. Early on in the campaign, a series of events caused the Tanzanian government to withdraw their assistance and to sign the 1972 Mogadishu Accord, a portion of which established Museveni’s men as “subversive forces.”¹¹¹ Museveni’s writing places the label in quotations, presumably implying his disagreement with the use of such terminology. It is also important to note that Museveni was clearly aware of how his localized conflict had the potential to be reframed in the wider context of the Cold War. Indeed, he complained that groups around him were choosing to align with either the West or the East, and argued that “the [Cold War] was reflected in African politics because of the ... opportunism of the post-independence leaders...”¹¹² Whether deliberate or simply the result of intuition, Yoweri Museveni’s early grasp of the political implications behind names and labels seems readily apparent.

Museveni’s Rhetoric: Pre-9/11

After a lengthy political and military campaign, Museveni’s forces were ultimately successful in removing the Amin and Obote regimes from power, with an end result of Museveni

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 66, 67, 84, 86, 95, 109, 152

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 49, 108

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 69

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 76, 79

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 75, 79

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 75

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 74, 76, 79

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 39

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 72

¹¹² Ibid, pp. 86-87

being sworn in as the new president of Uganda in early 1986.¹¹³ Having often railed against the divisive and sectarian policies of previous regimes, Museveni was able to rise to power atop a swell of popular support, advocating for an inclusive, “broad-based united front” without political parties split along religious or ethnic lines as they had been previously.¹¹⁴ The new NRM government even went so far as to assimilate a number of guerilla groups that had been fighting *against* Museveni a short time earlier.¹¹⁵ President Museveni was described by some in the international community as “a new style of African leader to be emulated” for his ability to reform the government and improve the provision of healthcare, the military, and the economy.¹¹⁶

But as the NRM grew more and more inclusive, Museveni sought to consolidate his own power atop it, moving to fill government positions with individuals from his home area in western Uganda.¹¹⁷ This continued to the point where, “by the mid-1990s it was already clear that the NRM had tightened its grip in a way that left little room for meaningful power sharing.”¹¹⁸ Tripp argues that soon thereafter, Museveni’s government reached a sort of limbo stage, wherein it balanced between democracy and authoritarianism and could be classified as a hybrid regime.¹¹⁹ Englebert and Dunn provide an excellent description of the nature of such a regime:

They hold regular elections, but these are often manipulated to the benefit of the incumbents; they provide some civil and political liberties, yet more or less frequently

¹¹³ Ibid, pp. 169-171

¹¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 106-107

¹¹⁵ Museveni’s Uganda: Paradoxes of Power in a Hybrid Regime, Aili Mari Tripp, p. 48

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 2

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 25

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 26

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 1

*repress their exercise; they are not hegemonic, as they contain spheres of public life where opposition can organize and express itself, including the media, civil society, and legislatures, yet these groups lack autonomy and face considerable difficulties in asserting themselves; although not as easily repressed as in pure authoritarian regimes, their members remain more vulnerable than in democracies;... the security apparatus operates with few institutional and legal constraints and is often focused on domestic opponents...*¹²⁰

As the NRA government swung back towards less inclusivity and its legitimacy dwindled as a result, Museveni's behavior began to evoke the hallmarks of a hybrid regime. His strategy to consolidate power and secure his place in office increasingly involved the deployment of the state security apparatus in a campaign to deliberately harass and repress political rivals.¹²¹

In addition to Museveni's perceived insecurity at the hands of political competition, Uganda faced undeniable threats from as many as 22 rebellious groups operating within its territory after the NRM assumed power.¹²² Two remained active after 9/11 had occurred, and thus only they will be included in this study. A brief overview of each follows.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

As Museveni's NRM rose to power in 1986, members of the northern Ugandan Acholi ethnic group were driven by abuses at the hands of the new government into creating the Holy Spirit Movement, an armed resistance organization.¹²³ Though quickly stamped out, the movement's spiritual character lived on through Joseph Kony who claimed it as his own and

¹²⁰ Inside African Politics, Pierre Englebert and Kevin C. Dunn, pp 199-200

¹²¹ Tripp, pp. 25-29

¹²² Ibid, p. 153

¹²³ The Lord's Resistance Army, Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Conflict Encyclopedia, http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=160®ionSelect=2-Southern_Africa#

created the Lord's Resistance Army in order to continue the fight against the NRM.¹²⁴ The LRA quickly became notorious for its brutal treatment of civilian populations, employing executions, torture, and the mass kidnapping of hundreds of children on a regular basis.¹²⁵ The LRA last conducted attacks in Uganda in 2006 and now roam between the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, evading regional government forces and pillaging those they come across.¹²⁶

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

The ADF was formed by Ugandan Muslims who also felt marginalized by the new NRA government.¹²⁷ Operating from western Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and supported by allies in neighboring Sudan, the ADF began their strikes in 1996, targeting both Ugandan military forces as well as civilians.¹²⁸ Attacks generally took place in western districts of Uganda but occasionally occurred in Kampala, the capital, with deaths ranging anywhere from five to fifty per incident on a regular basis.¹²⁹ ADF activity peaked with 1998 grenade attacks in Kampala¹³⁰, but by 1999 it was on the verge of destruction.¹³¹ The group has experienced a resurgence in activity in recent years.¹³²

Museveni's autobiography mentions that "after [the end of the war] there was peace in the whole of the northern region until the bandits started their activities."¹³³ He goes on to describe efforts made to stamp out the security issues posed by groups in Uganda's peripheral

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ The Lord's Resistance Army, GlobalSecurity, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/lra.htm>

¹²⁷ The Allied Democratic Forces, Uppsala Conflict Data Program

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Tripp, p. 156

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ War & Conflict in Africa, Paul D. Williams, p. 139

¹³² Allied Democratic Forces, GlobalSecurity, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/adf.htm>

¹³³ Museveni, p. 173

areas, noting that the NRM had “been engaged in battling against one criminal group after another” since taking power.¹³⁴ His writing focusing almost entirely on the LRA, however, and refers to the group as “bandits,”¹³⁵ an “insurgency,”¹³⁶ a “rebellion,”¹³⁷ “lawlessness,”¹³⁸ and “criminals.”¹³⁹ He seemed well aware of the LRA’s pattern of heinous attacks, referring to their treatment of civilians as “atrocities”¹⁴⁰ and even going on to say that “what Kony’s bandits are doing is not only a crime against the state: it is a crime against the population... These are crimes against humanity on a massive scale. I find it completely distasteful that people do not with one voice condemn these crimes of Kony and his bandits.”¹⁴¹ Despite such invectives, at no time does Museveni refer to the LRA (or any others) as a terrorist group in his autobiography.

An analysis of statements by Ugandan delegates to the United Nations between 1986 and 2001 yields similar results. These individuals participated in discussions regarding terrorism on a regular basis but focused on broadly countering the phenomenon internationally and rarely referred to specific actors or events. For example, throughout the 1990s, delegates voiced their concern about potential links between terrorist groups and drug traffickers as well as the potential for these groups to acquire a weapon of mass destruction.¹⁴² Other discussions were dedicated to future international cooperation on these issues as well as Uganda’s willingness to explore future adoption of UN legal instruments on terrorism. Statements that did make references to particular groups or actors still predominately used terms like rebels or criminals. During a 1999 Security Council discussion regarding instability in the Democratic Republic of

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 207

¹³⁵ Ibid, pp. 173, 178, 209, 212, 213, 214

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp. 136, 179

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 176

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 209

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 179

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 214

¹⁴² See A/C.6/48/SR.14 (1993)

the Congo, Ugandan Minister for Foreign Affairs Amama Mbabazi referred to the Allied Democratic Forces as a “rebel group” and a “criminal element.”¹⁴³ That same year, Minister Mbabazi reiterated to the General Assembly that the ADF was a rebel group and the LRA was a “criminal gang.”¹⁴⁴ A 1996 statement mentions concern about “renegade groups” in northern Uganda that have committed “terrorist acts” on the citizenry,¹⁴⁵ but no organizations in particular were attributed as terrorists. Similarly, in 2000, Ugandan delegates argued that Sudan was playing a “terrorist role” in supporting various non-state actors, but the forces operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were still referred to as “opposition groups.”¹⁴⁶ Even as late as May of 2001, such groups in the DRC were labeled rebels.¹⁴⁷

Use of the term terrorist in the context of a particular individual or group was rare. A majority of such usages took place during the 1998 General Assembly General Debate which convened shortly after the bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, both Ugandan neighbors. It is reasonable to presume that these strikes resulted in a heightened salience of terrorism for countries in the region and, perhaps as a result, the Ugandan delegates made increased references to it that year. These references included a response to accusations by the Democratic Republic of the Congo that Uganda had violated their sovereignty: Uganda replied that the purpose was to “contain and eventually remove bandits and terrorists who have been... destabilizing Uganda.”¹⁴⁸ Delegates also described the LRA as a terrorist group¹⁴⁹ and, during remarks about the East African embassy attacks, asserted that “Uganda, too, suffered

¹⁴³ S/PV.3987 (1999)

¹⁴⁴ A/53/PV.95 (1999)

¹⁴⁵ A/51/PV.25 (1996)

¹⁴⁶ S/PV.4092 (2000)

¹⁴⁷ S/PV.4317 (2001)

¹⁴⁸ A/53/PV.24 (1998)

¹⁴⁹ A/53/PV.23 (1998)

terrorist attacks in which three civilian public buses were bombed...”¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, these incidents appear to be anomalies, as usage of other terms such as rebel had returned by the next year.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, in 2000, Uganda stated that the “two [security] issues of greatest concern to us ... are ... the issues of small arms and light weapons and of anti-personnel landmines.”¹⁵² On the eve of 9/11, the language of Ugandan politicians did not suggest particularly strong concerns about terrorists or terrorism domestically.

Museveni's Rhetoric: Post-9/11

By early 2001, an election year, Museveni's NRM government had maintained and even escalated the repressive targeting of political opposition members.¹⁵³ Museveni's primary competition in that year's presidential race was Kizza Besigye, the head of a group known as the Reform Agenda.¹⁵⁴ In an effort to undermine the group's legitimacy, the NRM associated the Reform Agenda with “rebel organizations ... [which] provided a pretext for harassment directed at them.”¹⁵⁵ 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror would soon provide the NRM government with a far more effective rhetorical tool for delegitimizing political opponents.

Indeed, the Museveni regime moved quickly to appropriate such rhetoric and to take advantage of the changing international security norms that manifested late in 2001. In October, while attending an African counter-terrorism conference in Senegal, President Museveni began to lay the groundwork, remarking that terrorism was not just a problem for the United States but one for Africa as well.¹⁵⁶ That same month, a Ugandan UN delegate paid his respects to the United States and then launched into Uganda's fifteen year history fighting domestic terrorists

¹⁵⁰ A/C.1/53/PV.8 (1998)

¹⁵¹ See A/55/PV.17 (2000), for example

¹⁵² A/C.1/55/PV.13 (2000)

¹⁵³ Tripp, p. 93

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, (quoting Nganda, 2003)

¹⁵⁶ Africa: Terrorism in US Affects Africa Too – Museveni, By P. Matsiko Wa Mucoori, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200110190238.html>

like the LRA and ADF.¹⁵⁷ In November, President Museveni too pledged his support for the United States and “the coalition against terrorism” in a speech to the United Nations.¹⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter, Ugandan delegates presented the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee with an initial report detailing the steps they had taken domestically in order to adhere to the requirements of Resolution 1373. In the report, Uganda again situated itself as a long-time victim of terrorism, citing attacks by the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Allied Democratic Forces as early as 1988 and 1994, respectively.¹⁵⁹ The report theorizes that the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi also targeted Kampala, and asserts that the LRA and ADF were linked with al-Qaeda.¹⁶⁰ Ugandan delegates to the UN continued to reiterate this narrative throughout the 2000s, often referring to both the LRA and ADF as enduring and notorious terrorist groups.¹⁶¹ Even Minister of Defence [sic] Mbabazi¹⁶² suggested that the LRA and ADF not only had terrorized Uganda for an extended period of time but that the ADF had been trained by Al-Qaida with plans to work together in the future.¹⁶³ Puzzlingly, none of this information had been mentioned just two years before when Mbabazo referred to the same groups as criminals and rebels. These revisionist claims are indicative of the concerted effort to reframe Ugandan security challenges in an effort to situate the country on the front line alongside the United States against terrorism.

Domestically the Museveni regime began to capitalize on the international counterterrorism mandate. In June of 2002, Uganda passed The Anti-Terrorism Act, which was touted as “clear testimony to the commitment of the Government of Uganda to fight

¹⁵⁷ A/56/PV.20 (2001)

¹⁵⁸ A/56/PV.46 (2001)

¹⁵⁹ See Ugandan report pursuant to resolution 1373, accessible at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/resources/1373.html>

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁶¹ See: S/PV.4792 (2003); A/C.6/58/SR.6 (2003); S/PV.4845 (2003); A/59/PV.14 (2004); A/60/PV.18 (2005); S/PV.5359 (2006); A/61/PV.13 (2006); A/C.6/62/SR.5 (2007), for example

¹⁶² Mr. Mbabazi was formerly the Minister for Foreign Affairs

¹⁶³ S/PV.5415 (2006)

terrorism.”¹⁶⁴ The Act criminalized a wide range of terrorism-related activities, targeting “persons who plan, instigate, support, finance or execute acts of terrorism” or those who are members or supporters of such groups.¹⁶⁵ The legislation also included a list of three identified (by the NRM) terrorist organizations within Uganda: The Lord’s Resistance Army (and the Lord’s Resistance Movement, another name for the group), the Allied Democratic Forces, and al-Qaeda,¹⁶⁶ conveniently providing President Museveni with a reason to expand his security apparatus.

After the passage of the Act, paramilitary security forces not only grew in numbers but also were utilized on a more common basis.¹⁶⁷ Tripp noted that by 2002 the political violence had shifted from “spontaneous eruptions of fighting” to “highly planned and organized” attacks.¹⁶⁸ One such unit was the newly created Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force (JATT), tasked with the coordination of all counter-terror operations within Uganda.¹⁶⁹ JATT and those under its purview have developed into a valuable tool of political intimidation and repression for Museveni’s regime, and abuses by these units have been well-documented. In years past, JATT has been responsible for the secret detainment of a number of individuals allegedly suspected of terrorism but not formally charged with any crimes.¹⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch released a ninety-page report in 2009 documenting systematic abuse of civilians by JATT members who were

¹⁶⁴ A/57/PV.16 (2002)

¹⁶⁵ Ugandan Anti-Terrorism Act of 2002

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁶⁷ Tripp, p. 136

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 93-94

¹⁶⁹ Ugandan Third report to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee (2005), S/2005/193

¹⁷⁰ Uganda: Charge or Release People Secretly Detained, Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/07/17/uganda-charge-or-release-people-secretly-detained>

ostensibly carrying out counter-terror operations, bolstering further these accusations.¹⁷¹ Similar concerns have been echoed in a number of other reports.¹⁷²

Longtime Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni has found domestic counter-terror legislation to be particularly useful during election season as well, “labeling as a terrorist the main opposition candidate in two recent presidential elections.”¹⁷³ Because the Ugandan media was also significantly impacted by the Anti-Terrorism Act, which reserves the right to shut down radio stations who host terrorists,¹⁷⁴ the law was able to be used to block perennial opposition candidate Kizza Besigye’s access to the airwaves in 2006.¹⁷⁵ Numerous reports by Freedom House corroborate these concerns, noting that the ATA was a particularly worrying piece of legislation for this reason.¹⁷⁶ Upon his return from exile for the 2006 elections, Besigye was also arrested and charged with terrorism for alleged links to the LRA.¹⁷⁷ In response to criticism that the 2006 elections may have been rigged, Museveni stated that “this coalition of bad forces [referring to the opposition] is not acceptable to us. Those who hobnob with terrorism, they spend all of their time attacking the movement which is fighting those very evils.”¹⁷⁸ Museveni went on to again “publicly accuse Besigye of being a terrorist and threatened to capture or kill all terrorists.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ Uganda: End Torture by Anti-Terror Unit, Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/04/08/uganda-end-torture-anti-terror-unit>

¹⁷² See State of Pain: Torture in Uganda, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/03/29/state-pain/torture-uganda>; Counterterrorism and Human Rights Abuses in Kenya and Uganda: The World Cup Bombing and Beyond, Open Society Foundations, <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/counterterrorism-human-rights-abuses-kenya-uganda-20130403.pdf>

¹⁷³ Compliance among weak states: Africa and the counter-terrorism regime, *Review of International Studies*, 36(3), 2010, Beth Whitaker, p. 653

¹⁷⁴ Tripp, pp. 100-101

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Freedom House Freedom of the Press Scores for Uganda, see 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013

¹⁷⁷ Tripp, pp. 66-67

¹⁷⁸ American Held on Terrorism Charges in Uganda, NPR, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5235000&ft=1&f=3>

¹⁷⁹ Tripp, p. 94

The Ugandan government doesn't appear likely to change their approach any time soon. In fact, they may have grown even bolder - at a 2014 United Nations Security Council meeting on terrorism and the threat it presents to international peace and security, a Ugandan representative argued that the African continent had long suffered from terrorism in the form of the transatlantic and trans-Saharan slave trades.¹⁸⁰ The same Ugandan delegate went on to reiterate that the Allied Democratic Front, which had resurged in the late 2000s, was similar to al-Qaeda and, newly, al-Shabaab.¹⁸¹ Domestically, the Ugandan police banned gatherings of over five people in public without approval from the Inspector General of Police in 2010, ostensibly to reduce targets for would-be terrorists.¹⁸² In practice, the law seems designed to stifle political demonstrations – indeed, in 2015 it was used to arrest none other than Kizza Besigye and another opposition politician.¹⁸³ Ugandan law enforcement bodies were also recently exploring possible legislation that would provide the Inspector General of the Police “the power to seize funds and property linked or intended for terrorism activities.”¹⁸⁴ In a 2015 statement, Museveni maintained the assertion that “the terrorism threat by extremist forces is one of the most urgent problems facing our region.”¹⁸⁵ It would appear that such counter-terrorism rhetoric will continue to be a valuable tool for the Museveni regime for the duration of his time in office.

¹⁸⁰ S/PV.7351

¹⁸¹ Ibid

¹⁸² Security teams to vet parties, weddings, <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/12/732619>

¹⁸³ Uganda police release Amama Mbabazi and Kizza Besigye, Daily Nation, <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Uganda-police-release-Amama-Mbabazi-and-Kizza-Besigye/-/1066/2782894/-/kys3y9z/-/index.html>

¹⁸⁴ Public raises concern on anti-terror bill, <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/668315-public-raises-concern-on-anti-terror-bill.html>

¹⁸⁵ Terrorism fight: Uganda to stand by Kenya, <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/666663-terrorism-fight-uganda-to-stand-by-kenya.html>

Conclusion

The phenomenon of rhetorically appropriating the war on terror is, of course, not endemic to Uganda - it has been employed elsewhere across sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. Kenya's Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, for example, has been cited by human rights groups for committing similar acts against political and social outgroups.¹⁸⁶ In Ethiopia, journalists critical of the state have been imprisoned under suspicion of working with terrorist networks, including the winner of the UNESCO / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize in 2013.¹⁸⁷ Representatives of the Ethiopian state argued that the journalist wasn't "accused for their writings ... it is because they were guilty of working with terrorists."¹⁸⁸ Similarly, a new law in Egypt would make contradicting "the official version of events in terrorism-related cases a crime."¹⁸⁹

As this trend has grown, a number of academics have identified the tendency of statesmen to reframe their domestic issues in the context of the war on terror. These assertions are typically only made in passing, often attributing the chief motivations behind rhetorical shifts to nothing more than efforts to lure financial and military benefits from the West.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Uganda has been a strong counterterrorism partner for the United States since 2001. President Museveni has participated in a number of regional counterterror initiatives, and Ugandan troops represent a majority amongst the African Union forces deployed in Somalia.¹⁹¹ A 2010 Time

¹⁸⁶ Kenya: Killings, Disappearances by Anti-Terror Police, Human Rights Watch 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/18/kenya-killings-disappearances-anti-terror-police>

¹⁸⁷ Journalism Is Not a Crime: Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2015/01/21/journalism-not-crime>

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ New terrorism law could target journalists in Egypt, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/05/africa/egypt-terrorism-law-journalists/index.html>

¹⁹⁰ See: Is Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza playing the terror card? BBC, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32829183>; Bhatia, p. 13; Tripp, p. 171, Whitaker, p. 653

¹⁹¹ US Military Involvement in Uganda Yields Mixed Results, Voice of America, 2012, <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-military-involvement-in-uganda-yields-mixed-results/1453697.html>

article suggested that Museveni's cooperation in countering al-Shabaab renders him a valuable ally in the region and undermines criticism that otherwise may have been made about lack of democratic reforms in Uganda.¹⁹² But Whitaker has found that the states most compliant with the new counterterror regime "did not receive significantly larger aid increases between 2000 and 2005 ... than their counterparts" who were less compliant.¹⁹³ She goes on to note that the states who "received the largest proportional increases in US military assistance... suggest decisions based on a range of strategic and other considerations."¹⁹⁴ It would appear instead that the rhetorical shift employed by the Museveni regime after 9/11 was motivated primarily by the power that labels have to delegitimize others and their causes, an especially useful tool for a perennial president with a need to stifle political opposition. Future research on the presence or absence of rhetorical shifts within full autocracies and or democracies may be able to yield fruitful insight on the factors that incentivize and limit the use of such linguistic facades.

¹⁹² Balancing Counterterrorism and Democracy in Uganda,
<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2016175,00.html>

¹⁹³ Exporting the Patriot Act? Democracy and the 'War on Terror' in the Third World, *Third World Quarterly*, 28(5) 2007, Beth Whitaker

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 1022

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